



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board Discusses *Integrating Communities and Schools* Task Force Recommendations, Praises Watkins On Performance

Formally recognizing the need to integrate communities and schools, the State Board of Education adopted several recommendations from one of its five task forces.

"Schools and communities need to partner in order to ensure that children, especially those at-risk, do not fall through the cracks," said Sharon L. Gire, State Board of Education Vice President and co-chair of the Task Force on Integrating Communities and Schools. "This report clearly states that integration of schools and communities is critical to the ultimate success of both."

Herbert Moyer, co-chair of the Task Force and State Board of Education Member, said the recommendations found in the report can easily be integrated by school districts to make its partnership efforts more effective.

"It is the hope of our Task Force that communities and schools find the recommendations valuable as they shape local policy, reach for and find solutions, and build strong relationships," Moyer said.

The task force made recommendations to the Board in several areas, including, but not limited to the following:

- The Board seek legislation and create policies where necessary to allow school districts greater flexibility in the use of existing financial resources to meet identified community needs, such as school readiness, family resources, and out-of-school time programming.
- The Board advocate for continued use of funds from other state agencies to support school and community integration, and encourage the provision of funding to support community driven initiatives.
- The Board and Superintendent of Public Instruction develop a guide for local school districts that clearly outlines how to promote integration between schools and communities.
- The Board advocate for rules and regulations that enable the provision of quality services taking place in school facilities before and after the school day.
- The Board encourage school districts to create local plans for promoting and sustaining community/school collaboration. The district plans should include measurable goals, fiscal accountability, community resource audits, a process for data collection, and long-term sustainability plan for initiatives that integrate communities and schools.

"These recommendations clearly illustrate that Michigan continues to be a leader in school and community integration," said State Board of Education Member John C. Austin. "After school programming had its beginning in places like the Flint Community Schools and Mott Community College. Schools can continue to use these worthwhile educational options to help kids succeed academically."

A complete copy of the Task Force's report is available on-line at www.michigan.gov/mde.

In other business, board members discussed the year-end evaluation of Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins, in which State Board President Kathleen Straus praised Watkins for his outstanding work.

"He has completely changed the tone of public education to one that is positive and nurturing," Straus said. "We are extremely lucky to have such a dedicated individual as Superintendent. His performance is outstanding."

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Several members of the public spoke during public participation in praise of Watkins, including Forest Hills Public Schools Superintendent J. Michael Washburn, parent Shari Krishnan, Herb Yamawishi of the Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan, and Denise Dooley of the Michigan Parent Teacher and Student Association (PTSA) and the Dearborn PTA Council.

In other business, the Board unanimously approved a major revision to the Michigan Curriculum Framework by adding content standards for several additional areas, including arts education, career and employability skills, health education, life management education, physical education, technology, and world languages. The move comes as the Department of Education begins the task of clarifying the standards and benchmarks to make them useful to teachers in their professional work.

The Board also adopted a Policy on Learning Expectations for Michigan students, as originated in the work of the State Board of Education Task Force on Embracing the Information Age.

The policy will serve as the foundation for a new Teaching and Learning section of the revised Framework, and serve as a guide to the writers and editors who will revise the Framework.

“The adoption of the Learning Expectations Policy, along with the process for revising the Michigan Curriculum Framework, sets into motion a process for ensuring that all Michigan students possess the critical thinking skills necessary for success in a global world,” said Michael David Warren Jr., Board Secretary.

Further, the Board will begin incorporating grade level content standards, as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, for the purpose of assessment in mathematics and reading in grades 3-8.

The Board also heard from Russell Mawby, Chairman of the Learning to Give Steering Committee and one of Michigan’s leading citizens, and Kathryn Agard, executive director of Learning to Give, regarding its efforts in developing a service learning curriculum. The curriculum is extremely supportive of the State Board’s Affirming Service Learning Policy, adopted last month.

Finally, the Board received a report from the 2001-2002 Michigan Teacher of Year Jim Linsell as he wraps up a year of fabulous work and achievement. Linsell, a sixth grade teacher in the Traverse City Public Schools, will return to his position this fall. Board members were also introduced to Susan Gutierrez, social studies teacher at Forest Hills Central Middle School. Gutierrez will work on sabbatical with the Department of Education as Michigan Teacher of the Year for 2002-2003.

The next meeting of the State Board of Education will be held August 8, 2001 in Lansing, after board members decided to cancel their regularly scheduled July meeting.

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